

# Latest News from Robinson Crusoe's Island

*The Lonesome Cast-Away's  
Cave and Famous Lookout-Hill  
Still There But Now  
Busy Fishermen's Boats  
Enliven the Beach Where the  
Cannibals Held Their Feasts*



Government Chart of Juan Fernandez Island 360 Miles Off the South American Coast in the Pacific Ocean.

(A) Lookout Hill Where Robinson Crusoe Kept Watch with His Spy-Glass.  
(B) Somerset Bay and the Beach Where Robinson Crusoe Saw the Footprint and Later on Broke Up the Cannibal Feast and Rescued His Man Friday.  
(C) The Cave and Stockade Where Crusoe Lived.

**M**ORE than three hundred miles off the South American coast in the Pacific Ocean is the lone little island where Robinson Crusoe was cast away. On this lonesome island of Juan Fernandez Alexander Selkirk lived for four years and four months, and it was the narrative of his experiences which the great novelist, De Foe, made into his enduring masterpiece, "Robinson Crusoe."

When the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's ship Ebro steamed into New York Harbor the other day the civilized world received the first news which has come from Crusoe's island in many years. The Ebro had visited the island of Juan Fernandez and the passengers had had an opportunity to see Robinson Crusoe's cave and "The Lookout" on the hill where Crusoe, through his spy-glass, watched the cannibals, and the passengers strolled along the same beach where Robinson Crusoe discovered the footprint on the sand and, later on, single-handed, broke up a cannibal feast and rescued his faithful man Friday.

The Ebro had broken the forty years silence that brooded over Robinson Crusoe's island.

"We have been to the land of boyhood enchantment," said the captain of the Ebro. "We have lived over a day with Robinson Crusoe. It has been the feature of my life as a mariner."

This was the first news from Robinson Crusoe's island in two generations. The Ebro carried an excursion of 240 people from Valparaiso to Juan Fernandez, and they remained on the island for five days. Many passengers crossed South America to make the trip to the island. The Ebro was the first steamship to reach that isolated spot since 1879.

Wireless heralded its approach and every native was on the beach. No Indian ever looked with wider-eyed surprise on the caravans of Columbus than did the natives of Juan Fernandez on the good ship Ebro. They had never seen an ocean-going steamer before, and never dreamed of a vessel so large outside the pages of a picture book.

The Ebro made the island in the evening. Soon she was a blaze of light from stem to stern. And the ship's band charmed the people with tunes they had never heard. Excited natives raced the beach. In their midst was an official figure of a man who appeared to be calming them. Night shut down and Captain Duncan waited for the dawn, but in the darkness fitful blazes could be seen on the beach, indicating that some of the natives were camped there for the night—like the cannibal bonfires of old Crusoe's day.

The channel of Cumberland Bay, which the Ebro intended to enter, is not safe to attempt at night. But at daybreak a boat was sent ahead to make soundings and discover if the Ebro had sufficient sea room to negotiate the channel. Captain Duncan had no chart. He had to rely for his knowledge of the harbor on local fishermen. Even they could not insure the safety of so large a craft, but finally a safe anchorage was made.

The "Poo Bah" of the island—for there was a real "Poo Bah" there—welcomed the officers of the Ebro and the excursionists in his official capacity of Captain of the Port, Customs Inspector and Health Officer. Nobody thought of work that day. The entire population, men, women and children, attired in festal garb, crowded the shore. To many of these simple people living on the shore of the sea, and sustained by it, the coming of the Ebro was the greatest event in their lives.

A loud-throated shout rent the air. In the distance on the hillside a lonely figure could be defined. He was dressed in the skin of goats and carried an umbrella of the same material. An old-fashioned musket rested on his shoulder; two pistols hung at his belt and a great broadsword without a scabbard swung from his side. Then another figure appeared and another—a dog and a colored man.

Robinson Crusoe, his faithful man Friday and his good dog had come back to life!

In a clap-net boat these motley natives impersonating Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday made their way to the Ebro and welcomed all on shore, where the passengers were promised the sight of the very places that De Foe described.

At the landing Senator Henrique Zauñitu Prieto, of Chile, made a speech, and Mr. Vaughn, British Minister to Chile, and Mr. McCloud, the British Consul General, also addressed the natives.



The Modern Robinson Crusoe and Friday. These Natives Dress Up and Paddle Out in a Primitive Canoe to Welcome and Celebrate the Rare Visit of Some Passing Ship.

These formalities over, Robinson Crusoe took his unexpected visitors for a trip over the island.

They saw the little place on the side of a rise in the hill where Crusoe lived in real life. Here he gathered bread, rice, three Dutch cheeses, five pieces of dressed goat's flesh and a small portion of corn, with which he set up housekeeping. Here he carried all his ammunition and stores. Here he wove ship's cable in and out between rows of stakes, as a protection against an enemy that never came.

The passengers also saw "Selkirk's Lookout," with its tablet erected to commemorate his story on the island.

This modern Robinson Crusoe took them up the side of the hill where the real Crusoe lay concealed looking through his spy-glass at the preparations for the cannibal feast that some thirty natives were making on the beach below. Then, in the words of De Foe, he told of the rescue of his faithful man Friday.

"This poor wretch, at liberty for a moment while the savages prepared for another captive, started to run with incredible swiftness across the sands directly toward me, two savages in full pursuit.

"Having made a very short cut down hill I clapped myself in the way between the pursuers and the pursued, hallooing to him that fled who, looking back, was at first perhaps as much frightened at me as at them; but I beckoned with my hand to him to come. Then, rushing at once upon the foremost, I knocked him down with the stock of my piece. I was loathe to fire because I did not want the rest to hear.

"Having knocked this fellow down the other who pursued him stopped, but as I came nearer I perceived he had a bow and arrow and was fitting it to shoot at me; so I was obliged to shoot at him first, which I did, and killed him at the first shot.

"The poor savage who fled, though he saw both his enemies fallen and killed as he thought, was so frightened with the fire and noise of my piece that he stood stock still. I beckoned to him to come to me. I gave him all the signs of encouragement I could think of; and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down after ten or twelve steps, as a token of acknowledgment for saving his life. At last he came close to me and then he knelt down again, kissed the ground, laid his head upon the ground, and, taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head;



Crusoe's Cave as It Looks To-day.



Old Illustration of Crusoe Watching the Cannibals on the Beach from His Famous Lookout Hill.

this it seems was a token of swearing to be my slave forever."

That night, in the weird wavering light of huge fires, the entire population and the visitors danced to the music of the Ebro's band. These fisher folk, full of frenzied excitement by the unusual events of the day, participated in every ceremony with all the enthusiasm their Spanish natures could display.

So fascinating was the native Chilean dance, Cucca, that the visitors danced it exclusively. Roast pig, roast goat, lobsters and many varieties of fish cooked before the open fires, were some of the native delicacies partaken by the guests. No such event had ever occurred before in the knowledge of the oldest inhabitants.

The island of Juan Fernandez, the dwelling place for four years and four months of Alexander Selkirk, lies about 365 miles in the Pacific Ocean, west of Valparaiso. It presents a magnificent sight from the sea, abrupt walls of rock rise from the

Photograph of Crusoe's Historic Lookout, Which Is Now Marked by an Engraved Tablet Identifying the Spot.

waters to the height of a thousand feet. The surf breaking in a line of white foam on the shore sounds like the voice of a distant cataract.

Ragged cliffs covered with moss overhang the water, except where the few bays indent the coast. Punctuating the skyline are many peaks, that of Yonka lifting its head 3,000 feet into the clouds. Three harbors break the coast line, Cumberland Bay on the north shore, Port English on the south and Port Juan on the west. All are inaccessible to large boats, except Cumberland Bay. The island stretches

Photograph of Somerset Bay Taken by the Captain of the "Ebro" Showing the Fishing Settlement on the Beach Where Robinson Crusoe Fought the Cannibals.

twelve miles long and four miles wide at its broadest part.

About 250 Chileans now live on this desolate spot. Their livelihood is obtained by gathering lobsters and cray fish, which abound along the shores. Cod, rock fish, herring and lamprey eels are included in their catches. The population live in rude abodes about Cumberland Bay, but a few isolated families are scattered over the island.

Farming is done on a small scale, confined to garden patches and cared for by the women and children. There are natural peach and fig trees and a few herds of wild goats run free on the mountain slopes. Wild pigs inhabit the tangled valleys. There are only four horses on this island.

The people of Juan Fernandez are nearly all blood relatives, descendants of a few families who settled there years ago and continued down to the present time. They have their own small school, get newspapers and magazines from the mainland occasionally and are fairly well educated.

The island is leased by Senor Ricard, of Valparaiso, for its lobster fishing privileges. All the male inhabitants of the island work for him, selling their catch through his representative. The most pretentious building in the place, a small sheet metal and frame structure, is occupied by the "Poo Bah." A modern wireless station is installed there to transmit weather reports and earthquake warnings. Earthquakes are not infrequent, and a seismograph is maintained on the island.

The island was discovered in 1563 by Juan Fernandez, the man who gave it his name, a Spanish navigator and explorer. According to early sailors it was sometimes visited by the Indians from the mainland of South America, and a story was told of a Musquito Indian who was marooned on the island for many years before Selkirk's day.

Alexander Selkirk began his career on Juan Fernandez in 1704. He did not get along with Captain Steadling, the master of the Cinque Ports, on which he sailed, and requested that he be put ashore at the first land sighted. This is how Juan



Old Wood Cut Drawing of Robinson Crusoe with His Famous Umbrella, His Faithful Dog and Old Blunderbuss.

Fernandez got its famous inhabitant. He was put ashore with sufficient arms, ammunition and other stores to sustain him until he might expect rescue.

As the small boat that took him to shore was pulled away he knelt on the ground and entreated to be taken back to the vessel, but his pleas were denied, and for four years and four months he lived there,

engaged in those adventures that formed the basis of De Foe's wonderful story.

Captain Woodes Rodgers, commander of the Duke and Duchess, a privateer out of Bristol, saw a beacon fire on the island one night in 1709, and the following morning sent a small boat to investigate. Selkirk, clad in goat skins, with a parrot perched on his shoulder and a flock of goats and wild cats around him, waited on the shore the coming of this boat. He was taken aboard the Duke and Duchess, where he finished the voyage as mate of that vessel and returned to England.

Several years later a Spanish penal colony was established on Juan Fernandez, and in 1767 a fort was built on the brow of the hill overlooking Cumberland Bay. The prisoners in this colony suffered terrible tortures. They lived in cells dug in the sides of the clay walls. Later visitors likened them to the catacombs of Rome. Nothing now remains of this underground prison.

Crusoe's cave is located in what has come to be known as Crusoe's Valley, overlooking Cumberland Bay. It lies in a volcanic mass of rock about 200 yards from the shore. The height of the entrance is about 15 feet and the cave itself extends about 30 feet into the side of the rock, varying in width from 18 to 10 feet. Within the mouth the surface is of reddish rock with holes dug into the sides that might have been used for closets by the original occupant.

Spikes and nails in the walls, bits of rusted cooking utensils, a stone oven and other evidences of Crusoe's occupancy were told of by early visitors, but souvenir hunters in their search for relics have carried away most of them. During the famous gold fever of 1849 some of the argonauts who sailed around the Horn visited Juan Fernandez. To them is charged the pilfering of Crusoe's relics.

These prospectors found on the island at that time an American named William Peary, who became known to them as the American Crusoe. For years he lived in contentment with his neighbors, four families of Chileans, numbering about sixteen people.